

SERMON

Preach'd at

St. Clement's Evening-Lecture,

The First of July last, 1708.

UPON THE

Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper:

SETTING FORTH

The Danger of not Receiving at all, as well as of
Unworthy Receiving of that Holy Communion.

I. COR. xi. 29.

*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh
Damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.*

by the AUTHOR of a Divine the best Physician,
both of Soul and Body.

L O N D O N :

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the Water-side, For the Benefit of the Poor. 1708.

To the READER.

THE following Sermon was Preach'd at the Request of the Gentlemen of the Society for Reformation of Manners; which after much Importunity, I submit to the Publick for these two Reasons.

1st. To satisfy the World, that tho' I have undertaken the Practice of Physick, I do not decline the Ministry; but shall as long as I live, by the help of God, exercise the Function thereof for the good of Souls, as far as I can, without taking any particular Cure upon me, or interfering with the Office of any Parish Minister: And I have reason to believe, that I shall do good in this particular in my way of Practice; for whilst I had a Cure upon me, I always observed, that I wrought upon the Standers by as much as the Sick, when I had occasion to discourse on this Subject: And I shall not be wanting to improve it now as much as I did then, and I hope more, as I shall have more Opportunities, according to the course of the World, of never failing to send for the Physician of the Body; however, the Physician of the Soul is forgotten, and rarely call'd upon till Life is despair'd of; as I have shew'd more at large in my Reasons, for the use and conveniency of a Divine and Physician in the same Person, for the good both of Soul and Body; to which I refer.

2. A second and chief Reason for Printing this Sermon, is for the usefulness and necessity of such Discourses, considering how many there are, who never receive the Holy Sacrament at all, and how few receive it as duly as they ought, and the state of their souls do require. Sure I am, could Men be once brought to a right discharge of this Duty, nothing would put a greater stop to the Immorality of the Age, nor answer more the true end and design of such Societys; for 'tis impossible for them so frequent so sacred and solemn an Ordinance, with any serious and sober Thoughts about it; but they must have some sence more then ordinary of their Sins, and of the necessity of Repentance and Amendment of Life, as they hope for any Benefit by what our Saviour Christ has done and suffered, to put us all in a way of Salvation; and such Reflections could never pass off without some good effect upon them.

I bless God for it, my labour has not been in vain in this matter before for as it is a Subject I have very frequently preach'd upon, and with much Pleasure and Satisfaction, so it has not been without its Fruits in bringing many to the Holy Communion, who had lived long in the neglect of it, and others to a more frequent use of it, who rarely receiv'd it. God Almighty grant, that this Sermon may have the same good effect; that not only they that heard me, but every one that reads it, may be so convinc'd of their Duty and Interest therein, as never more to neglect so great means of Salvation. Amen. Amen.

From my Chamber at Mr. Brown's in Bartholomew-Close.





I. Corinth. Chap. xi. Ver. 29.

He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

TO perswade Men to a frequent Communion, and to endeavour to remove their *Prejudices* and *Excuses* against it, can never be a work out of season; considering the absolute necessity of receiving that blessed Sacrament, by all who would please God and save their Souls; and considering how many do wholly absent themselves from it, and how seldom others do partake of it.

I can hardly think, that any Man who professes himself a Christian, does wilfully refrain the Lord's Table, either by continually turning his back upon it, or not frequenting it so duely as he ought; but under some Pretence or Excuse, which he thinks reasonable and good: And I am so charitable as to think, that there are only a few (God Almighty lessen the Number) but who being convinc'd of their Error, would return to their Duty, and suffer themselves to be no longer lead away by such fatal Mistakes, in a matter of so great Concern to them, as the receiving the holy Communion.

Now amongst the many Excuses that are made, the Danger of *Unworthy* receiving, as set forth in my Text, is almost in every Persons Mouth, that neglects this Sacred Ordinance: And indeed these

Words of *St. Paul*, have been urged too far, as well from the Pulpit as the Press, so as to frighten a great many well-meaning Christians (very strict and conscientious in the discharge of most other Duties) from the practice of this, who might have receiv'd with much more Safety than neglected it.

Therefore for the Conviction and Satisfaction of all such, who have either really or only pretended the dread of *Damnation* here threatned for not receiving the Holy Sacrament. I shall endeavour to set before you the true meaning and import of the Words, and what may be justly infer'd from them, for our Instruction and Direction, in so weighty a Concern.

And 1st by *Damnation*, is meant *Judgment*, of which there are two kinds, *Temporal* and *Eternal*; the one referring to this Life, the other to the Life to come; *Temporal* are all sorts of Afflictions, whether of Mind, Body or Estate, which we are all exercis'd with more or less, in our Passage through this miserable Sinful World, and which accompany us to our Graves. *Eternal*, the Punishments in the other World, which take place immediately upon the separation of our Souls and Bodys by death and at the day of Judgment will be the Portion of both for ever in Hell.

Now tho' the *Word* here and elsewhere rendred *Damnation*, doth signifie both kinds, and both are threatned; yet the latter is only to be understood where the Denunciation or Infliction of the former does not answer the end design'd by it; *i. e.* where Men will not be wrought upon to do their Duty as they ought, and their Holy Religion does enjoyn and require of them, by some *Temporal* Punishment, they

they must expect to suffer an *Eternal* for it, where they will not take Warning by Judgment here, there will be a Judgment to come, when they will most dearly pay for all ; but when Afflictions and Troubles do lead Mento Repentance and Amendment of Life, such have no reason to fear, or be apprehensive of any future Condemnation ; for 'tis God's constant Method to punish us here, to spare us hereafter ; that is the certain end of all his Corrections and Chastisements ; and if they fail of that end, we have none to blame but our selves for it : So that in short the meaning is this ; *He that eateth and drinketh Unworthily* provoketh God by so doing to afflict him with some *Temporal* Evil ; and if that will not make him fit and prepare himself to receive the same more *worthily* ; it will provoke him to cut him off, and condemn him to everlasting Misery and Torment ; and how Just, nay, how Merciful is such dealing of God with us ? when he might upon the first act of our Irreverence and Prophanation of that *Holy Mystery*, appoint us our Portion with the *Damned*, does yet spare, and lays a *Temporal* Punishment where he might inflict an *Eternal* ; nay, who will never *Damn* us for ever, for any thing that a lesser Infliction will correct and amend in us ; so that *Temporal* Judgment is meant here in the first place, and *Eternal* only to be understood, when that is in vain, and to no purpose.

Otherwise there would be no room for *Repentance* ; for if upon every act of *Unworthy* receiving, we receiv'd our *Damnation*, it would be in vain to repent ; but God forbid that it should be so ; in such a Case the best of us would be in a miserable Condition :

For who can say he has receiv'd it *Worthily*? nay, who can say he has not receiv'd it *Unworthily*? for my part I dare not; and yet I hope for Mercy; and that as Repentance will obtain me the Pardon of any other Sin, thro' the Merits of my Saviour, so it will the Forgiveness of this; and if I preach the same Doctrine to you, I do but what I am perswaded I have a Commission for from the great Institution of this blessed Sacrament, Christ Jesus our Lord; *who came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, and who himself tells us, *The whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick*; and who particularly calls such to this Divine Banquet for Health and Salvation. *Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you* Matt. 11. 28.

I know but of two Sins unpardonable in Holy Scripture, *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, and *Final Apostacy*; and I know that the Reason why they were so, was, because they were past Repentance, and so could not be pardon'd, because they could not be repented of. But I trust in God, that there are none of you that hear me this day, but may have the Grace both to repent of not receiving at all, and of not receiving so well as you might and ought to have done; and that God out of his abundant Mercy, will accept of such your Repentance, and and for Christ's sake forgive your past neglect and unpreparedness, if you do but endeavour duly to receive the same, and as *Worthily* as you can for the future. 'Twas for this end the Holy Sacrament was instituted, to renew us by Repentance and receiving thereof, when by Sin we fell away from
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our *Baptismal Vow and Covenant*: for this purpose our blessed Saviour enjoyns us *often* to partake of his Supper, very well foreseeing how often we should have occasion for it; which he would not have done, had ever y act of our *Unworthy* receiving brought *Damnation* upon us in the latter Sense, and doom'd us to everlasting Misery; That were to have enjoyn'd us to do a thing to no purpose; for there is no reversing the Sentence of *Damnation*, when that is once past, all that we can do will signify nothing to avert it: Nay, it were to have enjoyn'd us the doing of a thing, which would but insure our *Damnation* the more; which far be it from us to think of our *Merciful Redeemer* who laid down his Life to save us.

But I would not be mistaken, as tho' I shou'd give you any Encouragement hereby, to be careless in your preparation for the Sacrament; or in the least to think, that there was no great necessity of *Worthy*, or any great danger of *Unworthy* receiving; by telling you, that there is Repentance for both, and Pardon; and therefore I must acquaint you withal, that without Repentance, God will never forgive us, and without it we shall not only receive no Benefit by that holy Sacrament, but add to the number of our Sins: And if we do not repent to day, how do we know that we shall ever have another Opportunity: We cannot promise our selves to live a Day, an Hour to an end, much less from one Communion to another; and if it should happen that we dyed before we repented, or receiv'd that holy Sacrament, what would become of us then? we were undone for ever, for ever *Damn'd*: Besides, supposing we shou'd live, and yet cou'd not repent, we were in the same miserable Condition; and let me tell you, we can't repent when we please; for besides the uncertainty of having time and opportunity for it; Repentance is the gift of God as well as Pardon; *for he and he only is the giver of all Grace*, and Repentance is the Gift of Sanctifying Grace, as Pardon is of Justifying. *If perad-*

venture God will give them Repentance, says the Apostle, 2 Tim. 2. ver. 25. so that if it be uncertain whether God will give Repentance, if it pass all peradventure, that no Man can give it himself when he pleases: To day if you will hear his Voice harden not your Hearts, says the Psalmist; and therefore the best and surest way, is for every one to embrace the present Opportunity, and prepare himself as well as he can to approach that holy Table; and then he need not fear but to have the Grace of God to lead him to Repentance, and the Merits of his Saviour, to supply the defects of his Performance. The Sum of all is this, our Saviour has commanded us to receive the Sacrament of his Supper; and S. Paul tells us, how we are to fit and prepare our selves for it, as we would receive the benefits of it; and to make us more careful about it, he sets before us the danger of Unworthby receiving, and gives us an instance thereof in the *Corinthians*; by which it is plain, that the contempt of this Duty, and not performing it as we ought, does provoke God to send his Judgments upon us; and that those Judgments are design'd to lead us to Repentance and Amendment of Life; and that if they have not that effect upon us, *Damnation* will certainly follow.

To clear this Text still more: We must consider what those Sins were, which rendred the *Corinthians* so Unworthby of that holy Communion; and what those Punishments were which they suffered for it; and then how far their Case may concern us, for the Sins and Punishments of Men are recorded in Scripture for our Warning: And indeed the Sins of the *Corinthians* in this particular, were exceeding great.

1st. They were guilty of *Schism*, divided themselves into Parties, and received the Sacrament separate from one another; a thing contray to the very Nature of the Sacrament, which is call'd the *Communion*, from that Love and Unity there ought to be among all that partake of it: and contrary to the intent of our blessed Lord, that it should be free and common to all; for what-

ever

ver difference there may be among Men at other times
 to their outward Circumstances and Conditions; and
 whatever distance was to be kept in other places betwixt
 High and Low, Rich and Poor; all was to be laid aside
 at that Table, where there is no respect of Persons;
 which they might have seen very plainly, in that our
 Saviour provided but one Table, and the same Bread
 and Wine for all: But contrary to this, the Rich ex-
 cluded the Poor as below them to eat at the same Ta-
 ble; not considering that the poorest Beggar was not
 so much beneath them, as they were beneath Christ;
 and yet that he should think no scorn to sit and feast
 with them; What Reason had they then so much to
 despise and undervalue them? but in such certainly,
 was that of the Blessed Virgin truly verified, *He bath
 filled the Hungry with good things, and the Rich he bath sent
 empty away*, Luke 1. 53.

2. They were guilty of that Intemperance and Excess,
 that when they came to the Lord's Table, they were inca-
 pable of receiving with any reverence, incapable of distin-
 guishing between it and their *common Meal*; and some
 of them were so full when they took the Lord's Supper,
 that they threw it up again: Which proceeded from the
 Abuse of a very good Custom then in practice, to have
 Entertainments call'd *Agapæ, or Love Feasts*, provided
 at every ones Charge, according to their Abilities, and
 common to all; at which every one moderately refresh-
 ed himself, and afterwards receiv'd the Sacrament, and
 what could be a more suitable Preparative than such an
 Entertainment; for that which was both the greatest
 Token of our Saviour's Love to us, and design'd by him
 to be the greatest indication of our Love to him, and
 to one another; But the *Corinthians* tho' they retain'd
 the Name, they perverted the very end and design of
 it, by their Divisions, and intemperate use of it.

Now could any thing be a greater Prophanation of
 that Holy Mystery? could any thing render Men more
Unworthy than such Disorders? could any thing deserve

Damna-

keep us alive ; the one as requisite for the *strengthening* and *refreshing* our Souls, as the other for our *Bodys*, that both must suffer for want of them : And as the intemperate use of the good Creatures design'd for the support of Nature, must destroy it ; such will the Lord's Supper prove to our Souls, if not rightly receiv'd. It is the same with this, as with all other Religious Duties : Now I am perswaded that none of you ever thought of not praying at all, for fear of not praying as you ought to do ; or would look upon it as the wiser and safer course than any that should do so ? And yet the case is the same both necessary to be perform'd, and both dangerous to be neglected ; both commanded by God, and both threatned with the severest Punishment if not rightly discharged.

There is not one of you tho' you live never so long without the Sacrament, can die without it : Now is not very strange that you should think your selves *Unworthy* all your Life long, and yet have no fear of *Unworthy* receiving at the point of Death ? that you should venture upon it at a time, when you are sure if you are not *Worthy* you never shall have another opportunity to repent and amend of it ; yet neglect it, when you may from time to time fit and prepare your selves as you ought, and so great a Work does require ? I do not doubt but many that hear me this day, have beheld with what Anguish and Trouble of Mind and Soul their departing Friends have express'd themselves for the neglect of this Duty, as well as for receiving it *Unworthily* ; and yet will we not take Warning ? will nothing satisfy us but making the Experiment in our own Persons ? Whatever Benefit it may be to any one on a Death-bed, who has neglected it all the time before, can't tell ; but to me as little seems to be expected from it, as for a Man's crying, *Lord have mercy upon me*, at the last gasp ; who never offer'd up one Petition before to the Throne of Grace : It is indeed a Conviction in both, of the neglect of their Duty, and a Warning sufficient

gent to us all, not to defer what must be done; and
worthily too, or we undone or miserable for ever: you
will not think me severe in this Sentence, if you are
willing to prevent it, whilst you have time and oppor-
tunity for it; and if you do not, sure I am you will ju-
stify me, by condemning your selves in the Hour of
death, and at the day of Judgment.

2. To shew that the danger is greater in not receiv-
ing at all than receiving *Unworthily*: Consider that we
can't be sav'd without the one, but by the other we may:
often receiving, in all probability we may come to
Worthy at last, because we make use of one of the
best means in the World to make us so; for he must be
very *unworthy* indeed, that can frequent so sacred and
solemn an Ordinance, without some sober and serious
reflections about it; and who knows how far they may
work upon him by degrees, and whether they may not
by the grace of God bring him in time to a right sense
and use of it? but never to partake thereof, is to put
our selves out of all hopes or possibility of any Benefit
thereby; and so expose our selves to the just Judgment
of God, both here and hereafter. And don't think it
not so, because you are not afflicted as the *Corinthians*
were; because you go from one Communion to ano-
ther unpunish'd; so much the worse; and you have no
reason to presume upon it, but rather to be troubled for
it, to fear that God spares you here to punish you here-
after; it is certainly the safest way of arguing, and
that which we can never be mistaken in to any disad-
vantage or prejudice to our Souls; but we may be de-
ceiv'd so long by other inferences, till we are past all
hopes of recovery. If you do not discharge your Duty
herein as you ought, would it not be kindness in God
to lay some Affliction upon you, to bring you to a sense
of it, rather than suffer you to live and die in the neg-
lect of it, and be for ever damn'd hereafter, for that
which might have been prevented by a gentler Correcti-
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on. Was it not better for the *Corinthians*, think you that God laid those Judgments upon them, to bring them to a sense of their faults? than to have suffered them to go on in the abuse and profanation of that holy Mystery, without any check or token of his Displeasure? who doubts it? and what was the effect it had upon them? it did not make them give over the use of the Ordinance (which it certainly would, had they not known, they could not do it with any safety) but immediately to reform the abuse of it.

So that all that we can learn from the Case before us is, that we take Warning how we approach the Lord's Table with unpreparedness of Heart and Mind: lest we provoke God to plague us with the like Judgments; and without we amend by them, lest he condemn us to everlasting Punishment; and if God so severely punish'd the *Corinthians* for their contempt and abuse of that sacred Ordinance, we must never expect to go unpunish'd for the total neglect of it, which is the greatest Affront and Contempt we can offer to it, and the great Institutor of it, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now, my Brethren, if there be any of you that hear me this day, who have absented your selves from the Lord's Table, for fear of *Unworthy* receiving, and to avoid the danger thereof, I hope, considering what you have heard, and I think may be satisfied in, that the danger is as great, nay greater, never to receive at all, then to receive *Unworthily*; that you will continue no longer in that Mistake, but suffer both to have their proper influence upon you; the danger of *Unworthy* receiving, to make you very careful to fit and prepare your selves for it; and the danger of not receiving at all to beget in you a just dread and fear of neglecting it at any time, lest you may never have another Opportunity, or God may withdraw his Grace from you, without which you can receive with no Benefit or Comfort to your Souls: I do believe the dread of *Unworthy* receiving

iving has been a real Scruple in some, and the only
impediment in their way to the Sacrament; but I hope
when they lay the one against the other, it will be no
more so.

There is no dallying in a case like this, where our
salvation lies at stake; and where the matter is, whe-
ther we shall be Sav'd or Damn'd: Did we but well
weigh this, no Excuse would satisfie us in the neglect of
so necessary a Duty for our Safety and Happiness, both
here and for ever; we should lament every Impediment
in our discharge thereof, tho' it was what we could not
help, sooner than frame idle Pretences to keep from it;
Alas indeed! for what will such Pretences avail you at
the Day of Judgment? you will be ashamed to offer
them. How will you be able to say, we were afraid
to do our Duty, when you were not afraid to neglect it?
Think you that God will be put off with such Excuses?
Or what will you be able to answer the great Judge,
when he shall demand of you why you were more afraid
of the one, then of the other? why you were less con-
cern'd in the Omission of that which was sure to offend
him, then in doing that by which you might have plea-
sed him? you must be dumb and silent, and self-con-
demn'd at such Questions; for there can be no Reason
given for the neglect of a plain Duty, especially of such
a Duty as is so much the Interest of every Man to per-
form, who would please God and save his Soul; and
such beyond all Question, is the receiving of the Holy
Sacrament.

And therefore I beseech you, as you tender your most
precious and Immortal Souls, as you value your present
and eternal Welfare and Happiness, as you would
escape the Judgment of God both here and hereafter,
seriously to consider what has been said; and whatever
you do, to resolve to do your Duty herein; which tho'
you may not discharge so well as you ought at first, yet
you may have the Grace of God to repent and amend,
and

and in time become so *Worthy*, as thro' the Merit of
Christ, duly to partake thereof, and of all its Benefits
to your present Comfort and Satisfaction, as
as to the future Eternal well-being and Happiness
of your Souls and Bodies; which they must not
expect to enjoy who neglect it.

*Now to Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons
and one God, be ascribed as is most due, all
honour, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion,
now and ever. Amen.*

FINIS.



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Author.*